

JEAN H. QUATAERT. — *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. xiii, 310.

The main theme of this book is the interaction between feminism and social democracy in Imperial Germany; the emphasis is on the leaders of the socialist feminist movement. Socialism and feminism were, as Quataert notes, two great egalitarian movements which converged during the course of the nineteenth century to seek social and sexual liberation. German social democratic feminism was the most successful expression of this convergence. By 1914 women constituted 16.1 percent (175,000) of the SPD and 8.8 percent (223,000) of the SPD-affiliated Free Trade Unions' total membership. By comparison only three percent of the French Socialist Party were women. German socialist feminism was *the* model for the socialist world; "its feminist plank was the most progressive" (p. 229).

The German socialist feminist movement was the pride of European socialism but until recently historians have allowed it to languish in obscurity. Although the literature on the SPD is vast and impressive, its feminist movement has virtually been ignored. Those few who have studied German socialist feminism have "placed the movement solely in its socialist as opposed to its feminist context" (p. 14). Quataert seeks to remedy these deficiencies and to analyse "the contradictions arising from the need to harmonize loyalties to class and sex, even party and union" (p. 14).

Socialism and feminism were not equal partners. Most of the feminist leaders studied in this book were socialists first, feminists second or even third — "We are in the first place Party members, secondly unionists, and finally, if at all feminists" (Gertrud Hanna, quoted on p. 11). Socialism, and at that frequently a radical socialism, was the chief ideological vehicle of the movement; feminism merely a trailer hitched to the main socialist wagon, "an adjunct ... a set of ideals poorly integrated into socialist thought" (p. 15). Socialist feminists, such as Clara Zetkin, declared that the primary goal of socialist women was to work for the socialist revolution. Specific feminist reforms which interfered with the pursuit of this goal would need to be set aside to await the collapse of capitalism. The frequent subordination of feminist goals to socialist doctrine and party interest has led Quataert to describe the leaders of German socialist feminism as "reluctant" feminists. Concern for class solidarity blunted feminist aspirations, but not all feminists were equally reluctant.

Quataert investigates the complex interrelations between socialism and feminism by concentrating on eight major socialist feminists, some of whom stressed union, others party activities. The most influential among the feminist élite was the radical socialist Clara Zetkin. As chief feminist ideologue she set the tone for the movement's rather doctrinaire adherence to chiliastic Marxism. Her main protagonist was Lily Braun, leader of revisionist feminism. Braun questioned the centrality, even necessity, of the class struggle. She endeavoured to help all women here and now. For Braun socialism was an effective means, a proper tool, for helping women; it was not an end in itself. Zetkin won this ideological tussle rather easily, although in the post-war years, under the guidance of Marie Juchacz, moderate socialist feminism with its emphasis on matters such as child care and municipal welfare work rather than politics was ultimately to be victorious.

All German socialist feminists came face to face with the entrenched anti-feminist prejudices of their society in which "women ranked in legal status with children and idiots" (p. 24). Nor was German social democracy free of these biases. Traditionally it had been the champion of feminist goals. Its leader, August Bebel, had published a tremendously popular book, *Woman Under Socialism*. But neither

the party nor the unions treated women as equals; theory and practice did not mesh. "Blatant, as well as latent antifeminism was a fact of life in the socialist organizations, as it was elsewhere" (p. 153).

Quataert's monograph is well organized and well written. It provides a very valuable analysis of the nature of German socialist feminism. Along with the works of Evans, Thönnessen and Stephenson, it contributes to a clear, if incomplete, picture of German feminism and the problems besetting German women in the recent past. However, the author's focus is too narrow and many questions are left unanswered. The reader learns much about eight socialist feminists but little about the movement as such. One would like to know more about the 175,000 members and about the second and third rungs of the movement's leadership. Was the membership active or docile? Did it share the leaders' socialist radicalism? Why did the great mass of working-class women remain hostile to the movement? Was the movement too political, too committed to revolution? One would even like to know more about the eight feminists under discussion. Why were the majority of these socialist leaders radicals? Was this merely a coincidence, superior political acumen or necessity dictated by affiliation with the *SPD*? Why was the revisionist Lily Braun virtually ousted from the movement while Edward Bernstein and other revisionists kept their place within the *SPD*? A more thorough, more detailed analysis of the split in the socialist women's movement is in order. Who and how many supported the *USPD*, and the majority socialists? Why? How many of the second generation female leadership joined the *USPD*? Why had membership dropped so precipitously during the war? Finally, a firmer assessment of the socialist feminist movement is in order. What was its significance? The author writes: "The socialist women's movement had only a minor impact on the German working class in general" (p. 219). What was this impact? Is this what the *SPD* wanted? Could the impact have been strengthened? Despite these criticisms *Reluctant Feminists* is an important addition to the still meagre literature on German and European feminism.

Juergen DOERR,
St. Thomas University.

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HANS MOMMSEN. — *Arbeiterbewegung und Nationale Frage*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979. Pp. 429.

To make a collection of essays into a good book requires prudent selection and careful editing. The essays can all relate to a central theme, in which case editorial work becomes particularly important to avoid repetition, and to check that frequent habit of historians of inserting chunks of previously published material into new settings. A second method is to select essays from a wide range of topics, so that the distinct personality of the historian becomes the theme of the book. This volume falls between these two stools. In spite of its very specific title only half of the essays deal with the question of the labour movement and nationalism. The other essays are concerned with problems of German social democracy from Lassalle to the trade unions in the Third Reich. The first half of the book is seriously marred by endless repetitions, showing that merely reprinting essays published elsewhere does not add up to a worthwhile book, however valuable each essay may be in itself. The second half of the book lacks any central theme, and as the